

Executive Committee Meeting and Tour July 8-9, 2010

YC Ranch – Ken Hansen provided a description of the project and project objectives. This project was funded with the help of FWS partners program. In order to preserve water rights, a reservoir was built on Yellow Creek. The reservoir is complete and rehabilitation of the riparian area is in progress. Fencing in the area was replaced or added in order to keep livestock away from the area to allow the willow plantings to establish. The area is important to wildlife and frequently used by deer.

Ken Hansen provides information about rehabilitation projects on the YC Ranch.



Tate Drysdale gives interesting PowerPoint on wind energy.

Wind Farm – Tate Drysdale of NextEra Energy gave a presentation on the wind farm in the Evanston area and the turbines used in the area. The life expectancy for a wind farm is 25 years. If the wind farm is decommissioned, the land will be reclaimed. There were many questions about wind capacity, transmission, and roads. Mr. Drysdale was able to answer the questions. Mr. Drysdale may be contacted at 307-789-1994 or Nathan.drysdale@fpl.com

Tamarix removal and native tree plantings were the topic of discussion by Chris Aimone, Uinta Co. Weed and Pest.



Blacks Fork Weed Tour – Chris Aimone with the Uinta County Weed and Pest District discussed treatments on the Blacks Fork River for tamarix. The work has been done by backpack sprayer. Riparian rehabilitation has been started with plantings of native plum, buffaloberry, chokecherry, cottonwood, and willow. Partners include Uinta County, Uinta County Weed and Pest District, WLCI, Uinta County Conservation District and private landowners.



Pat Anderson, USGS, discusses assessment work in the Moxa Arch area.

Moxa Arch Study – Spike and mowing treatments were implemented to replace monotypic sagebrush stands with a more diverse plant community approximately 10-15 years ago. Assessments were recently conducted to evaluate the vegetation response to the treatments. In 2009, USGS initiated a long-term study to evaluate sage-grouse utilization of treated areas and nearby untreated areas. While the study is not yet complete questions about the area are being answered.

Meeting

July 8, 2010

The meeting began with introductions and approval of the agenda.

Executive Committee Round Robin

Jason Fearneyhough – The State's Sage-grouse Implementation Team has sent their recommendations to the Governor. Their suggestions are in place and will affect everyone.

Steve Ferrell – Guidelines for wind energy are being worked on. Some of the issues have been controversial with landowners. A plan will be presented to the game and fish commissioners during their September meeting to address the concerns of private landowners.

The Aquatic Invasive Species program was rolled out before Memorial Day Weekend. It is a user pay system. The general public does not like the fee associated with the program but understands the necessity of keeping Wyoming's waterways free of invasive species. A report on the program is due to the state legislature on October 1, 2010.

The Sommers/Grindstone conservation easement agreement was signed. WLCI was just one of the many partners to contribute to this large conservation action.

Don Simpson – The BLM has 6 RMP plans that will be updated with the new sage-grouse recommendations. These updates will involve amending these land use plans. The amendments will be specific to sage-grouse conservation.

John Emmerich – Wind/sage-grouse research is moving forward. Protocols for the research were sent out on July 7, 2010. Bids for the research should be coming in soon. Industry has contributed funds to this research.

WGFD is continuing work on the seasonal range mapping effort. The work is being done by CSU and USGS and should be complete by next spring.

John Linn – All counties have had a reduction of revenue. He is concerned with the implementation of the sage-grouse plan and the wild horse initiative.

An air toxicity study for Sublette County is ready to be released.

Linda Leake – The WLCI Science and Management workshop proceedings report is available online. There will be a limited number (250) of hardcopies available at the end of July. WGFD helped make the printing possible and were thanked for their support.

On July 23rd, USGS will be doing a legislative briefing on landscape-scale science. WLCI is one of four initiatives to be highlighted. Justin Caudill from WDA and Zach Bowen from USGS will be at the briefing in support of USGS efforts.

Deputy Assistant Secretary for water and science, Deanna Archuletta, was in Jackson Hole and requested a tour of Yellowstone with a scientist. However, with the short notice it worked out better for Geneva Chung (USGS) to show her around the Jonah field and Geneva's worksite area. This was another great opportunity to highlight WLCI.

Cheryl Chatham – Three Wyoming Forest supervisors recently retired after many years of service. Acting supervisors have been detailed to those positions pending permanent replacements.

A report out this week shows the importance of America's National Forest and Grasslands to rural communities across the country. The updated National Visitors Monitoring Report reveals that recreation activities have helped sustain jobs and contributed to the economy. The full report is available at: www.fs.fed.us/recreation/programs/nvum.

The Intermountain and Rocky Mountain Regions have been discussing potential impacts to bats from "White Nose Syndrome" (WNS), a wildlife crisis that is killing cave-hibernating bats in thirteen states. WNS is a recently discovered fungal disease that has recently spread to sites in Missouri and NW Oklahoma within 300 miles of National Forests in the Rocky Mountain Region. Due to the threat to bat populations and ecological and economic impacts, the Forest Service is evaluating actions to slow the spread of WNS into the Southern Rockies.

Mountain Pine Beetle continues to be a priority across Forest Service lands. Mitigation work continues along roadways, recreation areas as well as increased communication to workers and the public.

Brian Kelly – Brian thanked the Coordination Team and all those who helped with the tour.

Scott Hicks, currently the deputy field supervisor, will represent FWS on the Executive Committee until the Wyoming Field Supervisor position is filled. Brian will be leaving at the end of July for his new position in Idaho.

He has endeavored to have a regional FWS representative attend a WLCI meeting.

As an update for sage-grouse, Brian stated that all agencies are working together to do what is best for sage-grouse.

Old Business

Conservation Plan – Pat Anderson gave a PowerPoint presentation describing his work on the Conservation Plan. This plan will work in conjunction with the WLCI Strategic Plan and Operation Plan and is aligned with the USGS science strategies. The plan will establish measurable objectives and outcomes and it will describe the what, where, when and how the Local Project Development Team operates. The plan is in its design stages and will need inputs from the Executive Committee (EC) at decision points. The Table of Contents will be available for the October EC meeting.

The members of the EC would like a copy of the PowerPoint presentation and a list of the first round of decision points to evaluate. Assistance from the Support Subcommittee will also be needed during this process.

Conservation Leases – Steve Jester from The Nature Conservancy (TNC) informed the group of the work he is doing on 'outcome-based habitat leases'. He has received funding to work out a framework on what a habitat lease will look like, how to determine conservation actions, what monitoring will be done and how to implement projects that will be of value to the buyer and sellers of conservation leases. Currently, neither WLCI nor TNC has projects that would fall into a short-term habitat lease.

Team Reports

Science Team

- The team will meet July 26-27th to evaluate this year's work and to plan for next year. STAC will be invited to attend one of the planning days.
- The Coordination Team and Executive Committee will be invited to give feedback on the Integrated Assessment.
- Jessica Montag, USGS, is developing a database for energy related literature. The database will be accessible to the public.

- A draft copy of the WLCI annual science report is available. The final report will be available when the USGS internal review is complete.
- Zach Bowen, USGS, will be heading to Washington D.C. for the congressional briefing and would like a one-page summary to give out at the briefing.

STAC

- Reg Rothwell retired. His duties as chairman have been turned over to Bob Lanka. STAC will be offering feedback for the Science Team work evaluations. Early planning for the next science workshop will be on the team's agenda.

Monitoring Team

- This team's primary focus is to serve as a resource for the LPDTs. They have solicited questions for the "Project Related Questions" database and have received some responses. Mark Bellis, FWS, of the team will participate with the sage-grouse mapping effort.
- The question was asked as to whether information on specific species was available on the Monitoring Team database. The response was that projects listed on the website can be and are tagged with species when inputted. We may need to add more tags in order to give better functionality to the searches.

Communication Team

- There is a need for an update to the comprehensive Communication Plan and commitment from the agencies to support the communication team. Kelsey Holzman from FWS will be working on an update to the Communication Plan and report on communication and outreach needs, both internally and externally. An updated list of who is currently on the Communication Team will be sent to the EC for review, to make changes as needed, and to identify specific communication skills.

Coordination Team

- The Support Subcommittee needs to be revitalized. Renee, Lance Porter (chair) and John Ruhs will review the team members and request changes as needed.
- FY2011 project ranking was initiated but not completed. The CT is getting together with project leads to review projects and obtain missing information.
- Included in the meeting packets are charts showing WLCI and partner project funding. Current information shows approximately one WLCI dollar to seven partner dollars. This figure does not include in-kind services. It was recommended to keep track of in-kind services for each of the projects.
- Ruby Pipeline monies should be deposited soon. Projects qualifying for these funds will have additional ranking before approval of funds.

New Business

WYNND

- Wyoming Natural Diversity Database works in association with the University of Wyoming. Gary Beauvais gave a presentation that introduced WYNDD and highlighted resources available to WLCI. Their mission is practical applied research on rare plants, rare animals, and imperiled vegetation communities.

Ruby Pipeline Funding through Wildlife Heritage Foundation (WHF)

- Craig Showalter, WHF Director, explained the process of accessing funds housed with WHF. They are acting as escrow agent. Disbursement of funds will be made when invoices and authorization is received. The WLCI account is a federated account, which does not have much risk involved in the investment but also does not receive many dividends. He did not believe this was the best

type of account and thought it would be prudent to review the different types of investment accounts and if possible change the account to be able to receive greater dividends.

- Steve Ferrell is on both WLCI and WHF boards. It was questioned as to whether this was a conflict of interest. Steve did not believe it was a problem, but will check. Steve checked with the Department's attorney, who agreed that this should not present a conflict of interest.

Great Northern Landscape Conservation Cooperative (GNLCC)

- Yvette Converse, Interim Coordinator of GNLCC gave a presentation on the GNLCC and Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs) in general. LCCs are part of Secretarial Order 3289 and boundaries are based loosely on bird migration. Their mission is to "Coordinate, facilitate, promote and add value to large landscapes and build resource resilience in the face of climate change and other landscape level stressors." The purpose is not to micro-manage programs such as WLCI but to provide opportunities to exchange information and funding opportunities.

Ag/Energy Survey

- Jessica Montag, USGS, and Justin Caudill, WDA, presented information on a USGS and WDA survey of local rancher/producers on energy development and its effect on their quality of life, potential impacts and implications. Survey participation was typical of the demographics. The final draft is due out in August. It was thought it would be a good idea to send the results to the participants.
- The report will be used in conjunction with the Ag mapping project.

USGS Cheatgrass/Invasive Species

- Expansion of invasive species is a recognized problem. Many entities are working to understand and treat the invasives. Dan Manier has been researching the correlation between invasives, soils, elevation, and human land use and the spread of invasives.

Seeds for Success

- DeeJ Brown, BLM presented information on this new program. The goal is to have native seeds and plants that are acclimated to the area that can be used for reclamation. It is believed that these seeds will have a higher success rate of producing viable plants.

Change of Chair

Due to Brian Kelly accepting a position in Idaho, it was necessary for an early change in the EC Chair. It was proposed to move current 1st Vice Chair, Steve Ferrell, to Chair, for the next year. Don Simpson was elected to 2nd Vice Chair. Mary Thoman will move to 1st Vice Chair.

Next meeting date

October 13 and 14 in Saratoga.

January 12 and 13 potential date for meeting/conference call-agenda dependent on October meeting outcomes and convening of Wyoming State Legislature.

Action Items

- PowerPoint and decision points on conservation planning to EC – Pat Anderson, Coordination Team
- One-page report for congressional briefing in late July—USGS, Coordination Team.
- Review projects listed on website for species tags – Carolyn Liedtke, Coordination Team
- Send current Team list and duties of each Team to EC – Carolyn Liedtke, Coordination Team
- Receive input/commitment for Communication Team membership and identification of specific communication skills by July 30 – EC
- Report status of Support Subcommittee at next EC meeting – Renee Dana, Coordination Team

- Look at whether chair of EC and non-voting ex officio membership on WHF board presents conflict of interest – Steve Ferrell Done – not a problem
- Add in-kind services to project funding tracking – Carolyn Liedtke, Coordination Team
- Find out if WHF account can be changed to something other than a federated account and who has the authority to do so. – EC and CT